

SEPTEMBER 15, 1943

SOCIAL

ACTION

The American Woman's Primer

Her Role In War And Peace

by

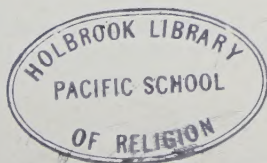
ELIZABETH G. WHITING

•

•

MARGUERITE WELLS

MARION E. MERCER



15¢

SOCIAL ACTION

Published by the Council for Social Action of the
Congregational Christian Churches

289 Fourth Avenue

New York 10, N. Y.

September 15, 1943

NOBLE S. ELDERKIN, *Chairman*

DWIGHT J. BRADLEY, *Director*

ELIZABETH G. WHITING, *Associate Director and Editor*

CONTENTS

THE AMERICAN WOMAN'S PRIMER, <i>by Elizabeth G. Whiting</i>	5
Perspective	5
The Present Task	12
Handicaps to the Full Use of Woman Power . . .	18
Signs of Progress	28
What of the Future?	32
WOMEN AS CITIZENS, <i>by Marguerite Wells</i>	37
<i>President of the National League of Women Voters.</i>	
WOMEN AS VOLUNTEERS, <i>by Marion E. Mercer</i> . .	42
<i>Vice-President of the National Board of the Young Women's Christian Associations.</i>	

Symbols on pages 6, 9, 15, 20, 26, 28, 31, 33 and 35 are by
Pictograph Corporation, New York.

SOCIAL ACTION, Volume IX, Number 7, September 15, 1943. Published monthly except July and August. Subscription \$1.00 per year; Canada, \$1.20 per year. Single copies, 15c. each; 2 to 9 copies, 10c. each; 10 to 49 copies, 8c. each; 50 or more copies, 6c. each. Re-entered as second-class matter January 30, 1939, at the Post Office at New York, under the Act of March 3, 1879.

EDITOR'S FOREWORD

This issue of *Social Action* grows out of the present crisis. There is no attempt, here, to lay emphasis upon woman's particular role as wife and mother. It can be taken for granted.

For many reasons, psychological and practical, the women of the United States have so far escaped conscription. The arguments for and against such action provide enough emotional dynamite to blow a budding senator or a political party into the limbo of utter defeat. The government will not resort to the policy forced upon the people of Great Britain if American women, through their foresight and energy, willingly answer their country's call. The fate of millions of tortured human beings trembles in the balance. The potential strength of American women, given without stint or reservation, can tip the scale.

* * * * *

Democratic society makes special demands upon its members. From these no man or woman need be excluded or can be exempt. The editor is grateful to Mrs. Mercer and Miss Wells, leaders in two of the more important women's organizations in this country, for the articles which reflect their broad conception of women's place in a democracy. The world of the future calls all women to join their ranks.

The reproduction on the following page is from a mural by Emil Bisttram which is in the main lobby of the Department of Justice Building, Washington, D.C. Shown in the bottom panel is the woman of earlier days and a ruder civilization. The large central panel pictures modern woman passing through an open door into the light of her new freedom. In the foreground of the panel Justice has severed the chains that bound woman to a man-made tradition interpreted by the artist as a crouching, sinister captor, whose harpy traits appear despite a heavy mantle. The small border panels portray some of woman's activities made possible by her release.

THE AMERICAN WOMAN'S PRIMER

HER ROLE IN WAR AND PEACE

BY ELIZABETH G. WHITING

Summer 1943. Gardens are in full bloom. Factories are multiplying the weapons of war. American-built tanks, guns and bombing planes in the skilled hands of men of many lands have turned the tide of war.

The United Nations know that victory will be theirs. But the war is not won and the cause for which we fight will not be secured by arms alone. We must mobilize for the military defeat of the enemies of civilization and against a limited conception of the meaning of this war.

What is total war? It is a war in which every citizen is involved. A war for all mankind. A struggle for human values which transcends a military decision. A fight for all the future, and from which no man or woman can be isolated. A war for survival in which lethal weapons are not more important than the sword of the spirit.

In such a war we cannot separate man power and woman power. It is *human power* that we need—human power carefully chosen, economically distributed and wisely used.

PERSPECTIVE

Women in Wartime

American women have always shared in the hard work and hazards of their country's wars. There is nothing particularly new about our role today except that a larger percentage of us are needed than in previous conflicts, and we are doing some things we have never done before. But so are our men. Never before have men had to adapt themselves to the super-human

strain of piloting a dive-bomber as it catapults through space at a speed of 600 miles per hour.

The last fifty years of scientific development have accustomed us to radios, electrical refrigerators, automobiles and machine-made dresses. Why should we pretend that war, 1943 version, should put us to tasks accomplishable in crinoline and stays?



Two hundred and fifty years ago, white women on this continent fought side by side with men—and sometimes alone—against the Indians.

During the Revolutionary War, Abigail Adams, the young wife of the man who was later to become the second President of the United States, watched the siege of Boston and the Battle of Bunker Hill from her high meadow nearby. She supervised a large farm, spun yarn and wove cloth for all her family, and managed to write her husband letters which were courageous—even gay—by candlelight, when her children were safely in bed. Refugees from Boston found safety in her home.

"Ever since the alarm from the Great Hill had sounded, the stream of refugees had grown in numbers until now it was threatening to become an avalanche. She gave them food, and drink and lodging. . . . She cared for them. In her own bedchamber were strange babies' cribs; the children's rooms were like small dormitories, crowded beyond health, but what could be done? In the kitchen, people slept; in the outhouses; even in the fields, at last. In the barn were soldiers, with whom Johnny proudly fraternized, learning their drill from them. All day long Patty and Sue, the maids, were running to and fro with food on platters, food in baskets for departing guests, fresh steaming food for newcomers. And all day long the milk that Abigail drew from her cows was being poured for the babies and the mothers. All day long, in spite of everything, the loom must work, and the wheel, for clothes were needed badly."¹

1. *Abigail Adams, The Second First Lady*, by Dorothea Bobbé, courtesy of G. P. Putnam's Sons, New York, Copyright, 1929, pp. 73-74.

During the Civil War American women gave heroic assistance to their armies. Those of the South, with the battleground on their doorsteps, emerged from an environment of seclusion and chivalry into years of hardship which, it is doubtful, we shall ever be called upon to suffer. One of them, writing from Alabama, tells a story which many Northern women would have duplicated had they been called upon to do so:

"We not only had to furnish clothes for our own immediate soldiers, but there were others belonging to the company whose friends were entirely out of reach, and we clothed them to the end. The clothing for the Negroes was a heavy item, and all supplies of that kind were cut off, and we could only give them what was made at home. On every plantation, and almost in every house, were heard the constant hum of the wheels and the click of the looms. The soldiers' clothes were a constant care. As soon as one suit was sent another was made, for they often lost their clothing, and it had to be ready to send at a moment's notice.

". . . Now in these last two years all our medicines were exhausted, and we had to go to the woods for bark, and roots and herbs. We made quinine of dogwood and poplar, boiled to a strong decoction, and then to paste. We had to do the work of a chemist, without his laboratory. We made our own mustard and opium and castor oil. This last, with all the refining that we were capable of, was a terrible dose, and only used in extreme cases."²

And Mary E. Livermore gave a vivid picture of Wisconsin farm women on the other side of the lines:

". . . The yellow grain was waving everywhere; and two-horse reapers were cutting it down in a fashion that would have astonished Eastern farmers. . . . Women were in the field everywhere, driving the reapers, binding and shocking, and loading grain, until then an unusual sight. . . . I observed how skilfully they drove the horses. . . ."³

In World War I, women again, some from economic necessity and others from motives of pure patriotism, turned to new endeavors and helped to win the war.

These are brief glimpses into our past. They are enough to

2. *The American Woman*, by Ernest R. Groves, Emerson Books, Inc., pp. 216-217.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 239.

give us historical perspective and to make us realize that American women, though not often on the firing lines of their country's epic struggles, have always been on the assembly line of democratic effort.

Women in Peacetime

To go back in history only as early as colonial days in this country, we find that women through their labor in the wilderness, in establishing new frontier communities and in adding to the agricultural development of a new continent have been a potent factor in the increase of the nation's wealth. They bore children in log cabins and covered wagons. They cooked and washed. They tended the sick. And when their help was needed, they chopped trees, planted corn or shouldered a rifle.

The woman wage-earner, it must be remembered, is nothing new under the sun. In Charles and Mary Beard's "The Rise of American Civilization," the authors remind us that, as early as the sixteenth century in England, some women had become skilled craftsmen and were occupied as pawnbrokers, money-lenders and book-sellers; they were even the managers of businesses developed by husbands or fathers and were already entering political and religious activities.

With the growth of the textile industry, women who had been weavers of home and hand-loomed fabrics naturally entered the factories. The word "spinster" was originally used for spinner—so great was woman's contribution to the textile industry.

It is true also that the development of industrial homework grew out of just such situations as these. For the early family was an economic unit in which the women and children as well as the "wage earner" produced the family's wealth. Because women could take care of their children and produce materials which society needed, early industrialists originated schemes for farming-out work to be done within the home. Other women left their homes to labor in the mills.

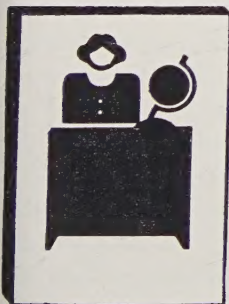
In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, it was not uncommon in New England for whole families to work in the first textile mills, because no one wage-earner could support a family on the pitiful remuneration received. And the wages received by women were always lower than those paid to men doing similar work.

Because large numbers of women entered the textile mills in the early days, it has been difficult to raise the standard of wages and conditions of work in this industry for both men and women. Today there are many men who, whether consciously or not, resent the wholesale employment of women because they fear that a larger labor market after the war will reduce wages, and because they know that it has been historically true that women are paid less than men for the same job. If the history of the textile industry is studied and understood, it demonstrates a basic economic truth, namely, that the disabilities of the woman worker and the way in which she has been exploited injure men and women alike. The individual woman has been caught in the web of circumstance which forced her to work for low wages in a limited number of fields because *she needed whatever money she could earn.*

In the professional realm, an equally striking example of this same truth is found in the preponderance of women school teachers.

Simeon Strunsky,⁴ in the year 1939, called attention to the fact that the enormous increase in the number of women teachers has undoubtedly been due to the

low salary scale in this profession. Women are not better teachers than men, necessarily. Nor is there any proof that they are less competent than men in some of the other professions which have been slower to welcome them.



4. *The Living Tradition*, Doubleday, Doran and Co., Inc., p. 59.

The following figures are significant:

WOMEN TEACHERS IN THE UNITED STATES:

1890	300,000
1930	700,000
1940	801,000

In these same years the ratio of men to women teachers decreased from two to five, to one to five. Undoubtedly the microscopic "salaries" paid to the ruling spirits of big or little "red schoolhouses" account for this predominance of the female sex in a profession so vital to the development of democratic institutions, rather than woman's superiority as the educator of both girls and boys. Thousands of better educated women have become teachers because *they needed whatever money they could earn*.

There have been many surveys which prove that the majority of working women have entered the labor market from sheer necessity. One of the more recent has been summarized by Beulah Amidon in a Public Affairs Pamphlet, published in 1938.⁵ The data for this study was furnished by 12,000 members of the National Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs, Inc. In addition to their own support, nearly one-half, 48 per cent, of these women reported that other individuals were solely or partially dependent upon them. 17.4 per cent had the entire responsibility for a household of from two to eight persons. When it is considered that this group of women does not represent those at the bottom of the economic ladder, but rather teachers, stenographers, cashiers, clerks and those in management or supervisory jobs, the fallacy that women work for "pin money" only or to buy themselves the luxuries of life is exposed.

It is obvious that the woman who does cleaning or laundry by the day in more privileged households; that the textile weaver who trudges wearily home to cook her family's dinner, is not working for any frivolous reason. The truth of the matter is that most women work either because they have no other means of

5. *Why Women Work*, Public Affairs Committee, Inc.

livelihood or because their menfolk are not able to earn enough to furnish their families with the necessities of existence.

Today, with a serious labor shortage, women who do not need to work are being urged to do so. However, even now, to a majority of the millions of women employed, the job is an economic necessity. But one still hears the rather bitter comment that women aviation or shipyard workers are not seeking employment for patriotic reasons alone. "They are working to earn money." Of course they are! In some cases they are taking advantage of unprecedented opportunities to pay up back bills, to reduce the mortgage, to buy a long coveted "parlor suite," or to start a little bank account against a rainy day. In most cases the woman works in war industries with mixed motives—patriotism *and* the desire to earn money.

One never hears a man criticized for getting a job in order to earn money for the support of himself and his family. Perhaps it is only fair to admit that women, as a sex, are not more greedy or less patriotic than men. And one cannot help but wonder whether such criticisms of women's motives are not the reflection of a latent fear of their potential competitive strength in the labor market.

If it be granted that most women, even during war, are wage-earners of necessity, it is also true that there are others who work for other reasons. Some, who never marry, seek the satisfaction of a companionship which life in the business or professional world opens to them. Some married women seek jobs because their home life is unhappy or lonely. Some particularly gifted women have abilities that cannot be satisfied completely with marriage and housekeeping. Only through the most intimate knowledge of the personal life of any individual can others know the motives for that individual's behavior. Is it not, however, a democratic assumption that each human being should be free to act according to his or her best judgment, so long as such action does not harm society? The only fair criterion to be used in choosing the woman job-applicant is the one by which men are selected: *Can she do the work?*

THE PRESENT TASK

We are a generation accustomed to read of government finance, of speed, hunger and death in astronomical figures. There is a question, however, whether we have learned to *think* in these figures. Perhaps it is better that we cannot. For if we did, we might not be able to survive the present or face the future. To say that we need at least 18,000,000 women workers in order to win the war, adds very little to the average person's understanding of the adjustments in human relations involved. There is a temptation, moreover, in dealing with specific social problems to reduce them to mathematical formulae and overlook their deeper meaning. We must try to see the individual woman represented by a black cipher on a white page.

The men responsible for planning our war strategy estimate that nearly 11,000,000 men will be serving in the armed forces of the United States by the end of 1943. Behind each of these men are needed many workers, each of whom, in turn, must be supplied with the necessities of life. This dual task cannot be accomplished unless some new source of human power is tapped.

There are over 17,000,000 women now working in factory or field, in offices and in the professions. Most of them are engaged in non-war industries and in essential civilian services. At least another million women will be needed by the end of 1943. This means that of the 52,000,000 adult women in this country, more than 18,000,000 or one-third, will be employed outside their own homes. They will be, that is, if military strategists determine national policy.

Are the women of the United States and their menfolk willing to allow that measure of military domination over the lives of American womanhood? There is no value in blinking harsh realities, and every reason for exploring the alternatives.

Granted that military history reveals errors of judgment on the part of generals, admirals and chiefs of staff—we know

that they are our specialists in waging war. Medical history reveals that equally serious mistakes, involving the unnecessary loss of human life, are made by doctors and surgeons. Human beings are fallible, sometimes stupid. But when we are ill, we trust the doctor whom we have chosen. When we decide to fight a war, we have to trust our specialists in that particular enterprise. This does not mean, even for a moment, that we give up our critical faculties; that we become blind slaves to a military machine and that the other fields of human endeavor cannot be sown and even harvested during war.

When we go to the hospital for a major job of surgery, we do not put our minds or our spirits or the care of the family in our enforced absence in the hands of the surgeon. When we go to war, while granting a certain area of life to the decision of the General Staff, we need not take a vacation from thinking. And American women are still given the freedom to think and to choose the specific ways in which each of us will expedite the coming of peace.

Events give us no alternative. We are at war. We intend to win it. And in the shortest possible time. To do so involves the energy of at least 1,000,000 women not now at work. Let us get on with the job and hasten the time when strategists in other fields again can fill a predominant role in American life.

Where are the million women who can help us to get this job done?

Some of them are in personal services or in luxury-trade jobs and might be transferred to work more directly connected with the war effort. The War Manpower Commission, in attempting to make these shifts, cannot overlook the fact that British experience has proved the value of beauty parlors and other personal services to the woman worker and to general civilian morale.

Of those not now employed, the large majority between the ages of 20 and 55 are married, because 3 out of 5 single women and 1 out of 2 widowed and divorced women are working. Therefore, the married-women group, where only 1 out of 6 is

now in paid work, constitutes the most important reserve pool. Among these homemakers are several million farm women and other millions who are the mothers of children under 16, none of whom should be encouraged to enter the field of employment. Taking account of all these factors, the reserve labor pool is estimated at 5,600,000 women, from which 1,000,000 workers must be drawn.

Millions of women will be able to continue their normal pursuits, but we cannot blink the fact that war produces a by-product of serious disorganization in normal family living. Nevertheless, we have ample human resources, even under present schedules, to strengthen democratic procedures and to enrich the cultural and spiritual life of America, provided that we all tap our inner reserves as the fighting men are called upon to do, and provided that all conscientious citizens as well as social and government agencies accept and carry out their responsibilities.

What Are Women Doing?

The coast-to-coast traveler finds new cause to be proud of American women. The newspapers tell us of beauty-parlor operators turned ship-welders and college graduates doing research chemistry and building airplanes. But one is not quite prepared to see a slender woman, dressed in dirty overalls—but with her grey hair neatly waved and protected by an attractive bandana—standing-by to grease a transcontinental train on one of its stops in a hot California town at the hour when most women are cooking their Sunday dinners. This was a new job for a grandmother.

It is strange, somehow, to tip a woman taxi driver. And should one allow her to lift a heavy bag into the luggage carrier at the rear of her car?

A woman physician in a New England community carries the burden of ministering to the physical well-being of a population which, in normal times, requires the services of three men.

A widowed woman, whose elder son helped to win the battle of Guadalcanal, has, with the help of her younger son, doubled the number of laying hens on her farm. She has a day and night job as she increases her herd of cattle and her drove of hogs, helping to produce food in sufficient quantity to maintain civilian health and to keep fit our fighting men and those of our allies.



In a West Coast shipyard, a woman welder, dressed in a striped coverall, looked husky enough to do any job. But the fact remains that women workers to-day come from every kind of economic and cultural level, from farm and city homes, from parsonages and palaces, from poverty and plenty. They come

with a variety of skills and mental and physical equipment.

The only generalization that can be made in describing them is the obvious one. They are all women. But one cannot say "all women," or "women" in describing the appearance, attitudes or ability of the feminine sex. The only fair way to discuss the capacity of women is to consider them as individual members of a group. Some women are more patient than some men; some stronger physically and keener mentally than some men. Some, through their early conditioning, find it more difficult than others to stand the pace of regular employment.

Some women will want to continue their jobs after the war. Others will welcome a return to home life. Some will have to work after the war, because of the death or disability of a soldier-husband. Some women regard a job or career as only a way station to marriage. Others educate themselves and enter employment with a conscientiousness equal to that of the most serious man.

Some women workers have an unsatisfactory record of steady effort on the job, although the records of absenteeism indicate that, where this is true, family responsibility, illness of chil-

dren, etc. are important causes. Other women work when sick and over-tired because they are afraid of losing a job or because they have a special sense of pride in maintaining a good record. When all this is summed up, it means only that women are human and it is no surprise that, from every hand, come reports of their dependability and skill.

A list of occupations in which women are now employed, compiled by the War Manpower Commission, illustrates the diversity of their ability and the fact that they are entering fields heretofore considered unsuitable for them. Near Concord, New Hampshire, for example, a lumber mill has been staffed entirely by women who are working as Log Riders, Bark Peelers, Head Saw Operators and other hitherto exclusively masculine tasks.

In steel mills, women are operating giant overhead traveling cranes. One of these girls recently observed is glamorous enough in appearance to grace a college Ivy Chain or a Hollywood set.

If one gets around a bit, one sees ex-stenographers carrying their over-arm bags over the trim uniform of a Wave or a Wac; Red Cross volunteers driving ambulances; personnel counsellors behind the interviewing desks of airplane factories; bus drivers; railroad conductors; meteorologists; marine electricians; house-movers—all women.

Although the absorption of women into employment has been so swift in recent months that the figures of one month are out of date the next, those for July, 1943, are of interest:

In midsummer of this year, 17,800,000 women were in the labor force and the armed services. This figure indicates an increase of 2,000,000 in the last six months and a total increase of over 5,000,000 since April, 1940. What are these 17,800,000 women doing?

Some 100,000 are in the armed forces—Wacs, Waves, Spars, Wasps and Marine Corps Women's Reserves;

36,000 are nurses with the armed forces;

2,000,000 are in war industries (exclusive of food and clothing);

1,000,000 are in Civil Service;
800,000 plus are teachers;
2,300,000 are in agriculture;
1,455,000 are in textiles, apparel, uniform, tent, leather
and other secondary war industries;
262,000 are in vitally important food industries.

Total, 8,000,000.

What are the nearly 10,000,000 other working women doing? Although complete figures are not available, it is known that the majority are in essential occupations; in trade, personal services, including laundries, in transportation and in industries producing necessities for civilian life. They are clerks, stenographers, telephone operators. They are nurses, doctors, laboratory technicians, Red Cross workers at home and overseas, social workers, lawyers, research chemists. In any of the thousand and one types of useful and necessary jobs which the imagination can conjure up, a competent woman can be found.

What More Can We Do?

If one is a woman, one is bound to ask, "Am I doing all I can? Am I doing the most important work of which I am capable?"

In a leaflet, "What Job is Mine on the Victory Line?", the Women's Bureau of the United States Department of Labor, piques the imagination with the following among many suggestions:

IF YOU'VE SEWED ON BUTTONS, OR MADE BUTTONHOLES, ON A MACHINE,

You can learn to do spot welding on airplane parts.

IF YOU'VE USED AN ELECTRIC MIXER IN YOUR KITCHEN,

You can learn to run a drill press.

IF YOU'VE SPRAYED PLANTS IN THE GARDEN,

You can learn to do spray painting of parts for bombers or army trucks.

IF YOU'VE FOLLOWED RECIPES EXACTLY IN MAKING CAKES,

You can learn to load shells.

IF YOU'VE BEEN A GOOD HOUSEKEEPER, SPOTTING EVERY SPECK OF DUST,

You can learn to be a good inspector of war equipment.

IF YOU'VE CUT AND MADE YOUR OWN DRESSES,

You can learn to trace patterns for battleships.

One might add many others:

IF YOU'VE BEEN A TRAINED NURSE,

You can, even if married, do part-time nursing in the under-staffed hospital in your community.

IF YOU'VE BEEN A TEACHER,

You can help to establish and maintain a day nursery for the children of working mothers.

IF YOU'VE HAD MUSICAL OR DRAMATIC TRAINING,

You can turn your talents to the enjoyment of hospitalized service men or the leisure hours of tired industrial workers.

IF YOU HAVE SKILLS IN ARTS AND CRAFTS,

You can help in the rehabilitation of wounded or shell-shocked service men.

IF YOU WANT TO WIN THE WAR IN THE LARGER SENSE,

You can become a better citizen.

HANDICAPS TO THE FULL USE OF WOMAN POWER

When, during the first world war, large numbers of women entered new fields of employment, an emergency agency was created to promote the welfare and efficiency of women workers. Later, by an Act of Congress, this became the permanent Women's Bureau of the Department of Labor. During its twenty-five years, the Women's Bureau has helped to lay the foundations for constructive policies affecting the lives of working women. Through its state and nation-wide surveys, the staff of the Bureau is able to assist employers and employees alike in solving particular problems, and constantly promotes the best use of woman power in peace or war.

In July of this year, the Bureau, under the able leadership of

Miss Mary Anderson, celebrated its first quarter century anniversary in the midst of a period when its long experience is invaluable to the nation. With women venturing into more difficult fields of endeavor and in enormous numbers, this agency, along with the Women's Advisory and Management-Labor Policy Committees of the War Manpower Commission, continues to safeguard the interests and health of women-workers, while assisting in the national policy of volunteer recruitment of the necessary labor force.

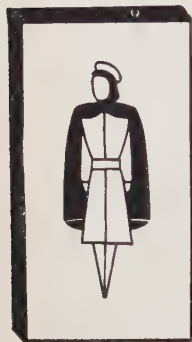
That there are special problems connected with such large scale employment of women goes without saying. Every conscientious citizen will want to analyze and understand them; for the welfare of women and children, the proper relationship between men and women, and the future of the family are all involved in the public attitude toward women workers.

Biological and Physical Handicaps

There are biological and physical differences between the sexes that inevitably affect the woman wage earner. To call these factors handicaps suggests only one side of the story; for every responsible woman feels that the bearing of children is her primary and thus most satisfying contribution to society. She knows that her body, precisely because of its adaptation to a particular function, limits her capacity at certain times and throughout her life for certain kinds of physical work. Yet some women react to these unalterable factors by a feeling of rebellion, while a few others tend to compensate for a foolish feeling of inadequacy by the grim over-determination sometimes found in the more violent feminists. Others use it as an excuse for leading the "sheltered life;" sometimes even becoming pseudo-invalids.

Actually, the physical history of women indicates that their stamina, their resistance to disease and their ability to work long hours and to bear pain and hardship is on the whole equal to that of men. This is true in spite of the fact that the architecture of their skeletons and the comparative lightness of their muscular systems does not equip them for certain jobs involving

heavy lifting and long hours on their feet. Furthermore, the menstrual cycle and the months of pregnancy from time to time make more difficult the planning of a woman's yearly output on a job. These are facts which most women have to take into account.



Nurses, waitresses and other women workers demonstrate that these difficulties can be surmounted. For example, women work long and late as scrub and cleaning women in the office buildings of our large cities. They carry heavy pails of water; trudge through darkened hallways pushing heavy bins of wastepaper and rubbish; and climb long flights of stairs which men in daytime

never use because an elevator carries them smoothly from office to street.

Are women better equipped for this sort of work than men? Hardly. These are matters of custom, tribal *mores*, rather than the outgrowth of well-considered planning, based on physical adaptation to a job. Unfortunately, old prejudices, on physical and other grounds, against the employment of women in certain occupations has thus far actually deterred the war effort. From sheer necessity, however, manufacturers of war materials are now employing women in ever-increasing numbers, regardless of prejudice and custom.

The aircraft industry provides the most striking example of the change in employment practices. In the spring of 1941, the few women workers in the air industry were employed almost exclusively on sewing jobs. One week before Pearl Harbor the number was only 4,000. In June, 1943, over 300,000 were employed in all of the intricate and highly skilled branches of aircraft manufacture. Today this number is even greater.

The wise employer of women recognizes that the average woman has less muscular strength than the average man and that certain health safeguards increase her efficiency. Several

government agencies, including the War Labor Board, the Women's Bureau, the War Manpower Commission and the Army and Navy Departments have issued specific recommendations to the employers of women workers. These include:

- (1) One day of rest in seven.
- (2) An eight-hour shift and a maximum 48-hour week, except to the extent that temporary exemptions under adequate safeguards are necessary to meet emergencies.
- (3) Adequate meal and rest periods and proper plant facilities therefor.
- (4) Adequate medical care and other health safeguards.
- (5) Protection against and education in the prevention of industrial accidents.
- (6) Reasonable effort to adjust assignments to working shifts so that mothers of young children can take care of their families without over-strain.
- (7) Adequate sanitary facilities.
- (8) Adjustment of the height of seats and other plant equipment to the smaller stature and physical capacity of the woman worker.

In these recommendations, government officials have taken cognizance of the fact that women workers, in addition to their biological differences, too often have to assume an additional physical burden which few men are forced to carry. For the employed woman homemaker must also care for children, buy and cook the family meals, wash, clean and mend. The old adage that "man's work is from sun to sun, but woman's work is never done," is a truism in the lives of millions of working women.

These safeguards involve special planning and additional expense, but two interesting results prove their value. First, through them many thousands of additional workers have been made available to the "arsenal of freedom." Second, work schedules, improvement in machinery, etc. initiated in behalf of women, have increased the efficiency and output of male workers.

Economic Handicaps

It is, of course, quite arbitrary to separate the elements contributing to the history of discrimination against the employment of women, for they are interrelated. All of their disabilities, whether real or imagined, are inseparable. It is important, nevertheless, to isolate them for purposes of analysis, because in no other way can the prejudices be understood and overcome. It is obvious, for example, that men have used "woman's weakness" as a red herring to cover other reasons for established policies that exclude women from certain fields of employment. Women are not too weak to work on precision instruments. Yet, because of the measure of skill involved and the hourly wage received, men have been reluctant to allow women to be trained or to compete for the jobs available.

The pressure of an all-out war effort has given women new opportunities. Many of them are being siphoned into the more lucrative industrial jobs and this country will have, after the war, a supply of trained women workers whose skill refutes the traditional point of view in regard to their native ability.

Closely allied with the woman worker's exclusion from the more skilled occupations, is the discriminatory scale of compensation under which she has suffered acute economic disability.

The Women's Bureau long ago laid down the policy that *wages should be established on the basis of occupation and not on the basis of sex*. The National War Labor Board, during World War I, applied the equal pay standard to more than fifty of its decisions. Unfortunately, in the intervening years, there was a tendency to revert back to wage discrimination between men and women. Recently, the War Production Board, the Army, the Navy, the Department of Labor and the War Manpower Commission have all advocated and supported the equal-pay policy as did similar agencies during the last war. The Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 embodies the same principle.

The two large national trade union organizations—A. F. of L. and C.I.O. have likewise adopted the policy of equal pay

and many union agreements being re-negotiated this year have already put this principle into the contract.

Furthermore, the National War Labor Board under General Order No. 16 has departed from its general policy and allows employers to make wage and salary adjustments to equalize the wages of women with those of men for comparable quality and quantity of work, without the prior approval of the Board.

It is difficult to secure accurate data on average earnings of men and women. The following figures for June, 1943, however, are significant. They come from two states, where separate records in manufacturing plants are kept. In Illinois, the men were receiving an average of \$49.62 per week; the women, \$28.32. In New York, the average weekly earnings of men was \$52.80; of women, \$30.51. It must be remembered also that millions of women workers have been and are employed in the lowest skilled and lowest paid occupations; namely, in domestic and personal services; in laundries and restaurants; and in agriculture. For Negro women, these limitations are accentuated by the factor of race prejudice.

It can be generally and categorically stated that a woman worker—whether the most poorly paid mill-hand or office clerk; or the highly trained executive, doctor, or lawyer—has, in the past, received less money for her skill and energy than a man in similar pursuits.

Because *Social Action* is directed primarily to readers in the Protestant churches of this country, it is only just to point out the fact that the same inequalities exist in the employment of women by local churches and their national Boards. Professional women church workers are often over-worked and under-paid, and they suffer the further penalty of exclusion from benefits provided under the Federal Social Security Act.

These conditions have improved during the last century. Many states now have minimum-wage and maximum-hour legislation on their statute books. Other labor and health legislation, including laws looking toward the prevention of industrial

accidents and disease, etc. now safeguards the woman worker in many states.

Much of this legislation specifically applies to women workers and, as such, has been criticized by leading feminists who have for many years advocated the enactment of the "Equal Rights Amendment." Sponsored by the National Woman's Party, this Amendment has won the support of some women of independent means and of others who have gained outstanding success in the business or professional world.

This Amendment to the Constitution has been introduced in every session of Congress since 1923, but has been defeated by the combined opposition of organized labor and many women's organizations, including the National Women's Trade Union League, on the grounds that it suggests abstract rights, not real rights; legal rights, rather than human rights; that it would give women "the right" to be exploited; that it would jeopardize state labor legislation already secured and finally, that it would create confusion and obstruct the continuing improvement of women's economic status.

There are many legal problems affecting women represented in the laws governing divorce, property rights, etc. which cannot be discussed here. But the overwhelming balance of opinion is that the Equal Rights Amendment would hinder rather than hasten the improved standing of women citizens before the law.

Much of the history of labor legislation is summed up in three great labor laws enacted by the United States Congress in the past few years, and accompanied by similar action in many states. The National Labor Relations Act of 1935 guarantees labor's right to organize for its welfare. The Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 safeguards conditions in interstate commerce by outlawing child labor and establishing Federal responsibility for nation-wide wage and hour standards. The Social Security Act of 1935 provides security through unemployment insurance and old-age pensions, although farm and domestic workers and the employees of religious, educational and philanthropic agencies are not included in the law.

It must not be forgotten, however, that labor's efforts in its own behalf have provided the greatest impetus to this record of progress.

Among the earliest labor organizations for women workers were those which grew out of conditions in the textile mills. In the early nineteenth century, women and children were summoned from their beds by the factory bell at 4:30 in the morning to work for from 12 to 15 hours a day at wages averaging \$2.25 a week in Massachusetts, and \$1.90 in Newark, New Jersey. Is it any wonder that Female Protective Associations sprang up and that their members chanted as they marched:

Oh, isn't it a pity such a pretty girl as I,
Should be sent into the factory to pine away and die?

Or the equally plaintive refrain from Hood's *Song of the Shirt*:

Sewing at once with a double thread
A shroud as well as a shirt?

The National Women's Trade Union League was formed in 1903 in order to assist in the organization of women workers. Men and women have, moreover, worked together throughout the growth of the trade union movement, although even here we find surprising examples of discrimination. More than 3,000,000 women, however, are now in the ranks of organized labor, and it is significant that the International Ladies Garment Workers Union with a predominance of women members is outstanding in its program of workers' education.

The long struggle of working men and women to lift their living standards and conditions of employment has been a courageous and, considering their grievances, a patient one. Its significance to men and women of good will lies chiefly in the fact that it has been a lonely one. It is to be hoped that in the future, as well as during the war, those outside the ranks will be wiser in their understanding of the labor movement and more cooperative with it. This is one of the major battles to be fought and won on the home front.

Psychological Handicaps

Ancient prejudices, dormant but still powerful, rise to haunt us today and they are not the exclusive possession of men. Sometimes a woman's attitude toward another member of her sex is more bitter, more emotionally charged than that found among any but the most unenlightened of the opposite sex.

A striking example of this came from the mother of a boy who had been in the Navy for over a year and had been "washed out" as a pilot simply because he did not take naturally to flying. At the end of fourteen months he was back where he started, instead of an officer with wings. This woman was resentful because "women" could become officers so "easily," and receive "more money" than her son.

Again, the appearance of the woman in uniform is the subject of considerable comment. Even the recruiting of women emphasizes this fact. Over the air and in the public press, women have been urged to join the Waves because Mainbocher designed the headgear of this branch of the service. Subway



cars boast enlistment posters of Wacs or Spars on which are displayed the faces of girls too beautiful, too radiant with health and vitality to ever find their counterpart in human flesh. To be sure, the artists who design the masculine equivalents of these girls represent all soldiers, sailors and aviators as godlike in their manly beauty. But we have yet to hear a radio program urging men to serve their country in order to be as handsome as possible. This emphasis is unfair to the women now in the armed services and has, undoubtedly, prevented hundreds of

particularly competent women from joining up.

These almost indefinable factors affect, I am sure, the decision of women to enter fields of employment where precedent has not prepared the way. There is no one of us who could not feel

quickly at home in the trim uniform and spotless apron of a waitress. But we may don the overalls and protective goggles of a welder with some reluctance. If in such a garb a woman makes herself conspicuous in any way, the snow-ball of prejudice is on its way to new dimensions.

Then there is the age-old feeling, so necessary for the continuance of the race, that "woman's place is in the home." The fact that many women would have starved if they had never emerged from the shelter of their homes is sometimes forgotten.

These psychological forces can be overcome only by being understood. They are among the intangibles that determine the destiny of a sex and a nation. For example, reports indicate that some church women feel that women industrial workers are "different," undesirable, perhaps unsexed. The false and unfair rumors of unsavory behavior recently current about the Wacs and sometimes heard in any discussion of women working side by side with men, play up the moral irresponsibility of the women. By inference, their male companions are pure as the driven snow. This is the equivalent of the story of Adam and Eve—the new Garden of Eden—the forbidden fruit.

In most towns or cities where large numbers of women are in training or where industry has imported women workers, the women residents who take any part in a program of social or religious orientation of these newcomers are a pitiful and inadequate minority. This is unfortunate for the following reasons: The women who are helping directly in the prosecution of the war feel a loss of morale. Other women hesitate to engage in pursuits that would hasten the end of the struggle. The intelligent adjustment of modern women to the problems of our time is delayed.

These psychological handicaps to women's full participation in the democratic effort in wartime underlie all other problems because they exist in the very structure of human relations. They are not war problems. They are human problems and therefore perennial.

SIGNS OF PROGRESS

In the first decades of the twentieth century there has been a slow but steady increase in the number of women who are gainfully employed. However, an analysis of the numbers indicates that, in comparison with the total increase in population, the trend is not as startling as is generally believed.

For example, in the census of 1890, the number of working women was 4,000,000, compared with 12,800,000 in the 1940 census. Comparing the total population of women of working age in these two years, the women employed in 1890 were 18 in every 100; and in 1940, only 25 in every 100. An analysis of the shift in types of employment open to women, also, is not as encouraging as isolated examples of the success of certain women would seem to prove.

Nevertheless, there has been progress on both fronts, and there is no doubt but that war periods tend to expedite it. When jobs have to be filled for which there are no male applicants, women find doors open to them which, when there are plenty of available men, remain stubbornly closed.



Even during the last few months, the rate of absorption of women into industry varies from place to place, depending upon the actual man shortage in a given locality. This fact is, no doubt, reflected in the striking increase in the number of women workers in the aircraft industry which has, through its astronomical growth, been forced to use all the available human power in certain

communities.

But not only in manual labor are women finding opportunities for their skill. In the field of journalism, more positions are open to women.⁶ One Tennessee daily has an all-woman staff.

6. *War Jobs for Women*, O.W.I. Magazine Section, Washington, D.C.

A newspaper in a midwestern city has tried an all-girl copy desk. The press associations are hiring more women reporters.

In the more highly specialized fields, the record is also one of improvement. *The National Roster of Scientific and Specialized Personnel* lists for employment the women, as well as the men, who have university training in many fields, including those of chemistry, engineering, architecture, etc.

Another area in which advance in the status of women workers is evident, is in the improvement in wage standards. Again, the aviation industry deserves special mention. Not only does the principle of equal pay for equal work prevail in the majority of the aircraft plants of this country, but also the even more revolutionary principle that "the entrance rate," the wage paid a new worker, is established for men and women alike. The record of the ship-building industry is second only to that of aviation, in establishing equality of opportunity for women.

In a recent Michigan court decision,⁷ a General Motors subsidiary was ordered to pay more than \$55,000 in back wages to 29 former women employees for violation of a state law prohibiting wage differentials on the basis of sex. Michigan, it will be remembered, is one of only four states having such a law. Therefore, the only way as yet in which this discriminatory practice can be abolished elsewhere is through the influence of federal directives, backed up by organized labor and general public opinion and through union agreements.

Workers in one plant, where the wage rate was found to be 47 cents an hour for women and 67.4 cents an hour for men doing the same work, declared that "*women in the labor force cannot be expected to exhibit the necessary morale when discriminated against by wage cutting. It is also important to the morale of men on the job as well as those leaving for military duty to be confident that the existing wage structures will not be undermined in their absence.*"

⁷. This decision is now under review by a higher court.

The following illustrations prove that the prejudice against women workers is disappearing.

The President of the National Association of Manufacturers has recently said that there is little difference between men and women as regards their satisfactory performance in industry.

In a recent decision of the War Labor Board the panel stated that: "If the panel may have a small part in demolishing the fictions and the fallacies which have arisen from certain facts of female physiology, it will have served a worthy purpose. . . . The idea of 80 per cent efficiency has evolved from a biological phenomenon which applies only to a period of time and not to relative efficiency and competence at other times. There is no proof, scientific or otherwise, that women are 20 per cent less capable than men all the time."

One manufacturer who is employing women for the first time says, "We like women. They are more precise—better housekeepers—more patient than men—more economical with tools and supplies."

The number of women occupying executive and supervisory positions is larger today than ever before. Here again, the picture is not altogether rosy, for reports indicate that many employees, both men and women, prefer to work under a man. This simply emphasizes a fact upon which sociologists have agreed for many years; namely, that the higher the post occupied by a woman, the more evident become her imagined disabilities.

Several women holding wartime positions of responsibility in government and industry reluctantly admit that they may "become feminists" in spite of themselves. On the other hand, some women who have occupied important positions in industrial management and are used to working in a "man's world" believe that women are not handicapped by sex, and that any

woman need only prove her ability to be given recognition similar to that gained by men.

Competence on the job is, of course, the best way to win recognition and advancement. The intelligent woman does not want special privileges when she enters the work-a-day world. On the other hand, it is discouraging for a woman of outstanding ability almost to attain true eminence in her chosen field only to have frustration as her ultimate reward.



There is one area of life in which women's progress has been smooth and unbroken, namely, that of educational opportunity. It is doubtful whether any enlightened minister would today express the sentiments of a certain Congregational clergyman who, in 1871, wrote in the *Congregationalist*, "If ladies enter our colleges and compete in the long course, with the other sex, they must do it by sacrificing the female accomplishments, the

piano, cultivated singing, and attractive dress. . . . Are we prepared to change the whole organic plan of our colleges—introducing the accomplishments which are as natural to woman as her breath, which accomplishments the Bible recognizes—'that our daughters may be polished after the similitude of a palace'—shaping the course of study so that she will not sink under the strain—having women on the Board of Trustees and in the Faculty—for it must come to that—throwing aside the experience of ages in the hope that our new experiment is to advance human improvement?"

One by one, the various fields of human knowledge have been made available to the woman who would explore them, although the highly trained woman often has difficulty in finding adequate channels for the full use of her ability. With the advantage of higher education, less tangible but no less important assets have accrued in the more enlightened attitudes upon the part of women toward their own life problems.

WHAT OF THE FUTURE?

The gradual but steady emergence of the American woman has revolutionary implications, revealing to her, as well as to society, vistas of expanding opportunity and new responsibilities. She is

"the product of the past and a major challenge to the future. . . . It is not enough to catalogue the achievements of the American woman or to locate her present standing in the various lines of her advance. There is something intangible that goes beyond the mere record of the changes in status that have occurred. There is a more subtle but decisive transformation of attitude that may best be called social disposition or social personality. This essentially creates the new woman, and although it is a shift due to circumstances, it has meaning far beyond that of the forces which have brought it into being. It has brought forth the modern career for women who now wrestle with the problems of human existence in a setting altogether new."⁸

"The setting altogether new," described by Mr. Groves in the late thirties, is antiquated today and we face a future which no one can foretell. Against the background of historical perspective, the signs of progress in society's acceptance of the "new woman" are definite but uneven. To the thoughtful person, it is obvious that Western civilization has placed women on the horns of a dilemma. On one, she finds herself protected in order that her biological function may guarantee the continuance of the race. On the other, she feels herself the product of educational and economic opportunities which, when fully exploited, may be in conflict with her more sequestered role. Somehow, this dilemma, accentuated by war, must be escaped.

There is no ready-made solution. Each woman will have to solve it in her own way. But she knows that she cannot do so alone. The aggressive woman of the feminist era is *rara avis* today. Women are finding that their place in the cosmos is a woman's, not a man's place; that they can be feminine, in the

8. *The American Woman*, by Ernest R. Groves, Emerson Books, Inc., Publishers, pp. 368-369.

best sense of the word and at the same time competent. Accompanying this advance in attitude is a similar one on the part of many men. There is every reason to hope that, in the future, where men and women work together, in a home or in the outside world, their interrelationships will steadily improve, for society's benefit no less than for their own.

The competitive character of industrial civilization has tended in the past to develop sex antagonisms in the economic realm, rather than a spirit of cooperation and fair play. During the depression of the thirties, the employment of women increased because reduced wage scales and tremendous shifts in job opportunities made their entrance into the ranks of industry more welcome by employers eager to reduce production costs. There is, in fact, considerable evidence to prove that depression as much as war accelerates the employment of women. If this fact is understood, men will support plans for full employment and adequate wage levels as the only safeguard of their own security.⁹ It is evident that, if the rights of women workers are to be protected in the post-war period, intelligent and comprehensive programs will have to be evolved and put into effect.



There are hopeful signs that homes and families will not suffer if women are allowed to "sow the wild oats" of economic freedom. To those who have this fear, it may be reassuring to know that all the polls of opinion, including the most recent, published by *Fortune* in August, 1943, indicate that women want, more than anything else, the satisfactions of marriage and children.

⁹ In a letter to Dr. Floyd W. Reeves, Chairman of the Post-War Manpower Conference, National Resources Planning Board, the Women's Advisory Committee stated their belief that "Government and industry must not assume that women are a reserve group to be used for war employment only, or that women are usurping men's places if they continue to hold their jobs after the war is over."

In this survey of the opinions of women between the ages of 25 and 35, the age group one might expect to have the most revolutionary ideas, there is remarkable unanimity of conservative opinion. In one question, for example, where the women were asked to register their choice between marriage and a career, 79 per cent chose marriage.

Although most of the women now working indicated that they hoped to do so after the war, and 17.8 per cent indicated that they would prefer marriage *and* a successful career, when it came to an absolute choice, less than a quarter of them would put a career above a husband and children. If women have their way, they will marry and bear children. The supposition that the employment of women outside their homes will reduce the supply of potential mothers seems ill-founded or, at least, open to serious question.

Thus it is apparent that women work because they have to, because, for one reason or another, they do not marry, or because, in some comparatively rare instances, they have the ability and the physical energy to carry on a home and a career at the same time.

On the other hand, it is also true that women do and will increasingly expect a higher degree of satisfaction in marriage and homemaking than they could claim when masculine support was their only hope of security. Simeon Strunsky provides us with a vivid illustration of this important new ingredient in marital relationships:

"A generation ago James M. Barrie in his little play, *The Twelve Pound Look*, paid homage to the typewriter as the sword and oriflamme of economic independence for the women of the English middle classes. Twelve pounds sterling, or sixty dollars, was then the price of a writing machine, and the twelve-pound look was the look which came into the eyes of the middle-class English wife when the master of the house became too trying."¹⁰

Although this feeling of independence may be somewhat difficult for certain members of the masculine sex to accept

10. Simeon Strunsky, *The Living Tradition*, Doubleday, Doran and Co., 1939, p. 58.

with grace, it should, on the whole and in time, improve and enrich the other values inherent in marriage. For no marriage can provide emotional, intellectual and spiritual satisfaction if it is built on economic necessity alone.



Furthermore, this new freedom of women shows to individual men, and to society as a whole, the inescapable fact that the woman who can give all her time and attention to homemaking must have her security guaranteed by a man whose income is both sufficient

and stable enough to feed, clothe, and house his family.

It is evident also that modern science has revolutionized the techniques of homemaking. That many women cannot afford to make use of labor-saving devices does not lessen their ultimate significance. The radio and the automobile have reduced the isolation of farm women. The homemakers of the future will do their work more swiftly even than those of the present. Electrical equipment, ready-made clothing, laundries and bakeries are beginning to take from modern women both drudging toil and outlets for her creativity. That she must find new and more productive channels for her energy if life is to be sufficiently keen and socially useful, is self-evident.

In the years ahead these scientific improvements must be made available to more millions of women through the lifting of income levels, extension of rural electrification and the improvement of general living standards.

These goals are not to be forgotten, even while we fight the war. Women, like men, will have to stake their future on the outcome of the precarious present. Unless we win the war, none of them can be attained. If women understand this simple truth, they will not remain idle while there is work to do. In spite of all difficulties, imagined or real, they will and must

take part in the struggle. The woman in uniform—and many more are needed—will carry her garments and her responsibilities with grace and competence. The married woman, whose children no longer require her constant care, will simplify her housekeeping in order to work outside her home several hours each day. The woman of means will find satisfaction in setting professional standards for her work as a volunteer. From these work experiences in wartime, women will come to a new realization of their capacities and a new appreciation of their responsibilities to society.

The fate of men and women is linked inextricably on every level and especially in that realm of individual and social values from which the spiritual quality of men and nations receives its sustenance. The Judeo-Christian tradition constantly reaffirms the sacredness of human personality, the inalienable worth of the individual. Democratic government is the best political vehicle to carry this tradition along the pathway toward more perfect realization. To all men and women of good will and religious insight, it becomes, therefore, an imperative to insure and expedite the safe passage of this vehicle.

The Church is the official custodian and accepted teacher of these values. That it lags in its task is tragic but true. Its programs even in wartime reflect too often the emphasis of by-gone days and fail to come to grips with the stern realities of contemporary existence. In its practices, the Church too often misuses the devoted energies of its women and withholds from them the opportunities for service through which their latent capacities might be discovered and matured. To say all this is not to ignore the fact that, here also, some progress has been made. But much more remains to be done before the Church can consider its own house to be in order.

The women of Great Britain, Russia and China have set a standard of devotion and self-sacrifice which we perhaps will never be called upon to emulate. Yet, the demands of total war are creeping up on American women. One sees this in the bewildered face of a war-bride, riding with her baby in the da

coach of a transcontinental train; in the weary droop of a stenographer's shoulders, who wants to share her soldier-husband's sacrifice by serving as a nurses' aid after office hours; in the oil-besmeared hands and coverall of a shipyard worker; in the anxious eyes of millions of mothers as they scan the daily papers for news of sons in distant places.

And the question asked by these women and tortured peoples everywhere is at once simple and profound. It embraces all of life and all life's meanings. *Will tomorrow "give unto them beauty for ashes" and "the oil of joy for mourning"?*

[Isaiah 61:3]

WOMEN AS CITIZENS

BY MARGUERITE WELLS

At the close of the first world war American women were made voting citizens. They were thereafter free to act in partnership with men in affairs of government. Outside the political area women continued to give their time to affairs to which they were traditionally adapted, although the scope of activity for women broadened even outside the political field as a result of enfranchisement. Women's part on the home front in the first world war increased their sense of responsibility for various kinds of public affairs in the same way that enfranchisement presented them with a new opportunity to function politically. War work has increased women's "know how" in social welfare even as the long campaign for suffrage had given suffragists a "know how" politically.

In wartime many duties normally shared by men and women devolve upon women alone as men leave for military service. At home or abroad, however, as civilians or in uniform, men are still a potent part of the electorate. The role of women in wartime as part of the electorate, therefore, is still in partnership with men and cannot be discussed realistically otherwise. And it is with political life that this article is concerned.

Perhaps political life is a phrase that needs definition. Often the terms in common use suffer most from want of agreement on their meaning. Political life need not mean holding office. It need not mean even active party service. It certainly is not confined to administrative service.

When women voters were a novelty in the United States there was great curiosity and some trepidation about them. Success of suffrage was too often measured by the number of women holding office. For years after the enfranchisement of women, reporters eagerly sought stories about women and after an election studied statistics on how many women were members of Congress or of state legislatures.

Such superficial ideas about what constitutes political life in a democracy is a sign of what ails government in our own United States. The American people, those who give government its power and who choose the government that shall exert that power, so habitually neglect their responsibility that well-founded concern is felt for the eventual success of democratic government in the United States. Partly out of frustration or lethargy, partly out of preoccupation with other interests, partly from a mistaken idea that all voters should master the science of government, millions of people habitually fail to make those simple choices about political issues of which they are capable and which they do exercise successfully in other matters.

It is not only in wartime that what government does is of supreme importance. In the time between wars, government by what it does or fails to do, makes war inevitable, postpones or perhaps prevents war. So it is not only in wartime that the

neglect of political responsibility is perilous. Wars are merely a culmination of evils that have not been remedied by other means. War itself is an emergency period. Just as sickness is. Surgery and medicine are no substitutes for normal health. They merely give the patient another chance to be healthy. *A country at war is fighting for another chance to maintain a healthy government.*

It is high time that Mr. and Mrs. Everyman come to some fundamental decisions and prepare to make some simple choices. It is high time they perceive some facts that stare them in the face. One of the most glaring is the fact that between the last world war and this we have had no positive foreign policy in this country. We failed to prepare to defend ourselves from aggression either by arming to the teeth or by allying ourselves with other nations. Which of those two courses to follow is one of the simple choices we must make. Our decision should be based upon some knowledge or belief deeply rooted within ourselves so that no propaganda such as assailed us 23 years ago can shake it if opposition should become active. For millions of people it is not necessary to follow the alternate plans for a post-war world, of which there are so many in this country today. It is more important that they realize that plans are of no avail unless they are the object of eternal vigilance on the part of our national government. Plans are nothing as compared to the operation of plans.

For the past century, Americans have paid blind homage to democracy as an ideal. We have worshipped the idea of government by the people, but have failed to perceive the heavy responsibility such a plan of government entails. It is not yet too late, but it may be some day, to exert that sense of responsibility, as it was almost too late in other democratic countries now fighting for a chance to survive.

It may be objected that this is a council of despair and that this is no time to convict ourselves of civic sins. On the contrary, it is when every patriotic citizen yearns to be of use that she or

he needs most to recognize where trouble lies. Let us, therefore, confess to the sin of worship of the idea of democracy without having met the responsibilities a democratic government places upon our shoulders. Then at once let us consider how we may repent.

To the sinner's cry, "What shall I do to be saved?", there is no easy answer. It is undeniable that government itself is a complicated affair and few have leisure or ability to unravel its complications. Political procedures through which those selected to government are chosen are both tortuous and baffling. The very act of voting seems oftener to be a gamble than a choice. Such difficulties may seem insurmountable. They cannot be surmounted all at once nor need they be resolved in all their details.

Line upon line, precept upon precept, the woman who assumes a sense of political responsibility will find developing within herself the same good sense, the same wise judgment, the same concern that has enabled her to meet life's other demands. No woman who has succeeded in meeting her responsibilities successfully as wife and mother, neighbor and church member, need quail before the demands of intelligent citizenship.

The reason people neglect their duties as voters is not so much indifference as it is lack of realization that a simple choice based on fundamentals is what democratic government demands of the people. It was because Lincoln believed that the majority of people possessed good sense and instinctive feeling about right and wrong that he so consistently relied upon *vox populi*. If it were not so there would be good reason to doubt the validity of belief in democracy. There are among the electorate enough habitual grumblers about how government is conducted to insure the success of democracy if faultfinding were converted into voting. It is the spectator mentality that plays such havoc with American political life. We behave like audiences at the theatre who don't like the play, or do, and

that is the end. In a democracy, however, the people are *a part* of the government, not *apart* from it. Must they accordingly learn the art of government, learn all about its techniques, become experts in order to play their part? If the answer is "yes," democratic government is doomed to failure. But the answer is "No, I need not be an expert in order to be a good citizen." Fortunately, the same qualities that count in the manifold affairs of men and women everywhere will count as well in the affair that is everybody's responsibility—democracy. Good sense, judgment, goodwill, fairness, an abiding sense of responsibility—millions of people achieve success through the application of these qualities to whatever they undertake.

American women, because they have acquired their political responsibility within a quarter of a century, are particularly conscious of what it entails. Their traditional role in the home fits them for understanding this newer task. The gradual broadening of home duties to neighbors and community, to church and school, shows them the route to effective citizenship. If a woman has been a success in her traditional role, she knows that success was not spontaneous, that it had to be fought for and how it was finally achieved. Responsibilities were no doubt forced upon her. The meeting of them was her achievement. The application to ever-widening fields of endeavor of qualities that have led to success in one field is the surest guide to becoming the kind of citizen a democracy needs.

WOMEN AS VOLUNTEERS

BY MARION E. MERCER

The normal American woman has an urge to be socially useful. Not wholly satisfied with activities carried over from earlier days, such as the home-making arts and various kinds of petty social competition, she seeks outlets for her surplus energy and time which will make her a part of the larger life of the community and the world. Enjoying a broader education and a greater freedom than women of other days, she believes in the dignity of work as part of her democratic creed. If her economic status gives her leisure time, she joins the ranks of the vast army of volunteers, in churches, social agencies and women's organizations.

As in every field of human endeavor, personal and social motives tend to become mixed, and individual interests and habits of thought influence the volunteer's choice of work. If she has been brought up to believe that the first duty of women is to alleviate human suffering, she may choose hospital and health services or the care of neglected and delinquent children. If she has inherited or acquired an interest in public affairs, she may choose the field of education or an agency whose purpose is directed to the betterment of society. If the ideals of the church are of prime importance to her, she may devote her talents to her church. Given the time and energy, she frequently works in more than one field.

The benevolent lady, whose social impulse formerly found its chief outlet in giving money to charity, is increasingly aware that she is missing out. She is learning that, in order even to give wisely, she must share in the work itself and understand something of present social issues and trends. She has learned that giving alone does not bring the knowledge or the right to dictate how her gift shall be spent. The newer volunteer wants to exchange her services to society for all the benefits she receives.

ceives without effort on her part. She takes training courses seriously and educates herself to think independently. In the main her efforts are directed toward goals which will abolish the need for charity. The rapid expansion of the private social agency since the last war has given an army of women volunteers opportunities in social work. In one national agency alone, the Young Women's Christian Association, the volunteer leadership has increased from 48,889 in 1927 to 113,809 in 1941. Under the demands of war, the American Red Cross has enrolled 3,000,000 volunteer women. The Churches, too, have increasingly offered new programs for social action which challenge men and women alike.

Roughly speaking, women volunteers may be divided into two groups. One is made up of those who fulfill the urge to serve through the job itself, finding their satisfaction in the process. They are willing to follow directions, to do detailed work involving repetition. Some develop techniques important to the work of the organization, saving large sums for the budget. In the other group are women interested primarily in the cause and who consciously relate their work to social goals. They become leaders; they raise funds and help in budget-making; they interpret the needs of the community to the agency, and what the agency does to the community. They work cooperatively with professional staffs. In the first group are many who, through skilled and imaginative volunteer training and organization, beginning with minor jobs, also progress to responsible positions of leadership.

In both groups are women who earn their own living during the day and give generously of their limited free time. This has been conspicuously true during the war. The Red Cross reports, for example, that in their drive to enlist nurses' aids, business and industrial women have been more ready to serve after working hours than have the women of leisure.

It is encouraging that women are slowly being included in important policy-making groups. They sit on Community Fund boards and Social Councils, on Boards of Education and Wel-

fare and on national religious bodies. In wartime, they serve on Committees of Civilian Defense and Public Safety. They are earning the respect of men in those groups for their ability and thoroughness, for the time they are willing to give and their knowledge of the community.

Psychiatrists suggest that the neurosis of our day, particularly among women, is frequently explained by a cultural lag.¹ Democracy demands a maturity and an independence of thought and action which many women lack. The security and dependence they have enjoyed has not fitted them for competitive American life. Psychotherapy offers no better healing process than absorption in a volunteer job. The development of new skills, working with men and other women on a common enterprise, assuming responsibility and relating oneself to community effort, all bring in time a sense of order and usefulness to empty lives. Finding one's place in a fast-moving world is to gain inner security.

Total war brought women with free time an avalanche of opportunities to serve their country. After Pearl Harbor every newspaper, radio station and organization in the country sent out an S.O.S. for help, and a huge network of volunteer defense rapidly spread over the country. National social organizations put their resources to the winning of the war, and adapted their programs to the needs of a suffering world. As women were called on to solve problems of conservation, food production, housing, health and public safety, delinquency and recreation,—all of which appeal to their natural interests and abilities—they found new outlets for their latent abilities.

Most women want some personal share in the world struggle for freedom, and women's voluntary war services will continue until the war is won and the boys come home. In speaking to the Advisory Council of the Women's Interests Section,² Gen

1. This idea is interestingly developed by Franz Alexander, M.D., in *Our Age of Unreason*, Part III, Chapter VII.

2. Address given on June 25, 1943, at the Mayflower Hotel, Washington, D.C. The Women's Interests Section under the War Department sends out information

eral Somervell said, "Under the pressure of war you have discovered new strengths, new outlets for your skills and talents. Fields of activity have opened to women that before had been regarded as solely man's province. You women hold the power to make or break our national morale."³ Even allowing for the audience whom he addressed and the obvious intent to spur women to greater efforts, this statement from a military authority is impressive and encouraging.

The machinery for volunteer wartime services did not get into high gear overnight or without much creaking. It still requires constant repair and replacements. Some women were slow to volunteer because they did not know what to do and did not recognize quickly enough the seriousness of the war for America. Time would have been saved by the prompt setting-up of clearing houses for volunteers on the order of the block plan now getting under way. A survey made by the War Committee of the Women's City Club of New York⁴ was inspired by criticisms of personnel directors that the so-called "idle woman" was lagging behind the working woman in her willingness to give her free time to war services. Personal interviews were held with 300 women living in the residential districts of Manhattan where the income level is over \$3,000. Less than half of this group (42 per cent) were giving time to volunteer war work. 15 per cent were engaged in other socially useful activity. Of the women interviewed, who felt they could not volunteer, a third (33 per cent) gave the care of children as the reason; other reasons being illness (including pregnancy), domestic difficulties, free time uncertain, or no free time. Only a fourth (27 per cent) of the women interviewed

tion about ways women can serve the Army's needs. Most national women's organizations are represented on the Advisory Council. Mrs. Emily Newell Blair is Chief of the Women's Interests Section.

. In February, 1943, The Office of Civilian Defense estimated that over 1,000,000 women were engaged in various fields of activity with which it is concerned.

. Survey on The Non-Professional Woman as a War Service Volunteer, Women's City Club, December 1942, New York City.

had been personally approached and almost a half (41 per cent) of this group stated they would work if asked.

The Survey concludes, "The interviewers are convinced that the principal cause of the relatively unsatisfactory response to the appeal for new workers on the part of the women of leisure is a reluctance to adjust habits of living to the demands of wartime service." No general conclusion can be drawn, nor any valid comparison made, between the "idle woman" and her working sister without surveys from other places and from a less limited group. The woman who lags in war work is found at all economic levels. Increased danger or moral suasion may lead her to volunteer.

The most disturbing reasons given for not volunteering are the difficulties of working with volunteer organizations. In the survey nearly a fourth (21 per cent) mention these. The verbatim remarks quoted in an appendix are illuminating and valuable to those responsible for the success of these organizations. They include such terse criticisms as, "Poor welcome for volunteers;" "too much red tape;" "too much shifting;" "jobs inconsequential;" "too much time wasted;" "silly politics;" "snooty executives;" "object to uniforms and system;" "never been called;" "you get shoved around, would rather make machine guns than sell bonds."

The demand for new services and the pressure for quick expansion and volume of work, explain some of the difficulties encountered by volunteers. Some organizations called for, and got, more volunteers than they could handle well. Standards were lowered and new volunteers became discouraged and critical. The war is a testing time for both organizations and women volunteers. After the smoke has cleared away, the public will want to know how flexible and efficient organizations have been in adapting to wartime demands. This happened after the last war. No organization can survive in the post-war world that wastes women's time and energies and treats them without consideration. Too few organizations have developed

adequate personnel policies for volunteers and few have any system of follow up.

Questions about women volunteers in the post-war world are not simple to answer. Have American women under the impact of total war won new opportunities and new responsibilities? Will well-trained women eager to be socially useful continue as volunteers, or will many turn to gainful occupations and professional life? With security from "the cradle to the grave" as a national goal, together with high taxes, can the private agencies continue to secure public support? What can women volunteers do to promote the victory of peace after the military victory is won?

Ray Johns, Director of U.S.O. Field Service, says, "The wartime services of volunteers should result in an awakened social consciousness and make available a great body of experienced volunteers for continued and expanded services after the war. Demobilization will be slow, and social services will be needed for the gigantic task of relief and rehabilitation. . . . Volunteers can play an important role in interpreting the need for world-wide rehabilitation and world organization. A new relationship between social service in a local community, the country and the world cannot be evaded." (In an address before the National Conference of Social Work, in New York City.)

It is evident that great areas of endeavor will be open to the women of America. Many with free time will find dignity and self-respect in hard work. Some, stirred by a belief in democratic equality, will strive for decent living standards for all peoples; some, moved by the Christian ideal of brotherhood, will help promote understanding and tolerance among all races. Some, as citizens of the world, will continue to work for the elimination of war. The combined efforts of all women will be challenged to bring order to a confused world and healing to suffering millions.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Wanted: Women in War Industries, the Complete Guide to a War Factory Job*, by L. N. Baker, Dutton, 1943, \$2.50. How the woman war worker gets her job—and what she is paid.
- On Understanding Women*, by Mary R. Beard, Grossett, 1934, \$1.00. Shows the place taken by women in the process of civilization from the origin of domestic arts through the growth of modern democracy and science.
- Women in the Twentieth Century*, by Sophonisba Preston Breckinridge, McGraw-Hill, New York, 1933, 364 pp.. Scholarly study of the political, social and economic activities of women in the United States.
- The American Woman*, by Ernest R. Groves, Emerson Books, Inc., 1937, \$3.00. An interesting and definitive book on the role of women in American life.
- Women and a Changing Civilization*, by Winifred Holtby, Longmans, 1935, \$1.75. A history and a forecast. Makes a plea for a society in which equal opportunities for both men and women shall exist.
- Women's Partnership in the New World*, by A. M. Royden, Norton, 1941, \$1.75. Stimulating discussion of woman's place in our civilization and her responsibilities.
- Three Guineas*, by Virginia Woolf, Harcourt, 1938, 285 pp., \$2.50. An examination by a brilliant English novelist of the questions concerning the education and economic freedom of women.
- Public Affairs Pamphlets*, New York City, 10c. each.
- "Why Women Work," based on a study made by the National Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs, Inc.
- "Jobs and Security for Tomorrow," by Maxwell S. Stewart.
- "Women at Work in Wartime," by Katherine Glover. Summary, based on official documents, of problems involved in the employment of women.
- Harper's Magazine*, September, 1943.
- "From Housewife to Shipfitter," by Virginia Snow Wilkinson.
- "The Factory Manager Learns the Facts of Life," by A. G. Mazerik.
- Information Service*, Federal Council of Churches, 5c. each.
- "The Church and Women in the Armed Services," May 22, 1943.
- "Woman's Status in Protestant Churches," November 16, 1940.